

REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 8-16, 18-26, and 28-30 are now pending, of which claims 1, 11, and 21 are independent. Claims 7, 17, and 27 have been cancelled, and claims 1, 8, 11, 18, 21, and 28 have been amended. Applicant asserts that no new matter has been introduced.

Applicant acknowledges, with appreciation, the Examiner's indication that claims 7-10, 17-20, and 27-30 would be allowable if written in independent form including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In response, claims 7, 17, and 27 have been cancelled, and independent claims 1, 11, and 21 have been re-written to include all of the limitations of claims 7, 17, and 27, respectively. Claims 8-10, 18-20, and 28-30 each now depend directly or indirectly from a claim that was indicated to be allowable.

Claims 1-6, 11-16, and 21-26 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ward (European Patent Application No. 0 921 666 A2). Independent claims 1, 11, and 21 have been amended to include subject matter that was indicated to be allowable. Furthermore, each of claims 2-6, 12-16, and 22-26 now depend directly or indirectly from an independent claim containing subject matter that was indicated to be allowable. Accordingly, applicant respectfully requests that these rejections be withdrawn.

Applicant asks that all pending claims be allowed in view of the amendments.

It is believed that all of the pending issues have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this reply should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this reply, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.


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Serial No. : 09/845,083
Filed : April 30, 2001
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Attorney's Docket No.: 06975-148001 / Processing 05

Enclosed is a \$120 check for the Petition for Extension of Time fee. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 9/19/2005



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